

ADVAITA VEDĀNTA AS A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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JAMES DOUGLAS MC MICHAEL

M.A., Ph.D.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AiB—*Aitareya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

BrB—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

BSB—*Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

ChB—*Chāndogya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

GB—*Gītā Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

KaB—*Kaṭha Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

KeB—*Kena Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

KeVB—*Kena Upaniṣad Vākya Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

SvB—*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* attributed to Śaṅkara.

TaB—*Taittirīya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara.

PREFACE

The highest of all metaphysical problems is the problem of God. Whether "God" is taken to be the Ultimate Reality or even in Advaita Vedānta, wherein "God" is considered to be an appearance of the Absolute, this is the case. For, in Advaita, the Nirguṇa Brahman is not a philosophical problem at all. It is entirely beyond the realm of philosophical reasoning and is only known by Immediate Intuition.

God (Īśvara) is a concept. However, it is a concept not only of theoretical value (i.e., to explain creation, etc.), but also of enormous practical value (i.e., in the seeker's pursuit of Final Liberation). God is an idea created by thought [which is recognized as pure ignorance when Knowledge dawns]. One's own idea of God, that is if one has the idea of God at all, may be inherited from tradition, but becomes one's own unique idea through the working of one's own mind. In Advaita, the concept of God is the result of philosophical reflection about the idea of God accepted from scriptural authority [i. e. *śruti*-which primarily refers to the *Upaniṣads*]. In sincere humility and reverent faith, the religious man says that it is futile for men to even try to think about unfathomable God. Yet, for Advaita, it is not the Brahman as God [Īśvara], but the Brahman-in-Itself [as Nirguṇa] which is incomprehensible.

Īśvara is an empirical concept- not in the sense that it is an abstraction derived from empirical experience [like the concept of nation]-but in the sense that Īśvara belongs to the empirical or phenomenal [*vyāvahārika*] realm. The concept of God is that *vyāvahārika* understanding of the *pāramārthika* Absolute Reality. It is like representing a three-dimensional object in a mechanical drawing. As such, the concept of God, like all other concepts [e. g., causality, duality, etc.], ultimately must be left behind [along with the concept-manufacturing mind] if one is to know Reality as It-is-in-Itself.

The concept of God is a changing concept. Not only has there been tremendous variety among men conceptualizing God ranging from the ridiculous to the sublime (i. e., throughout the world and in different historical periods), but also the concept has changed within one tradition. Thus, the exposition of the

concept of God in Advaita Vedānta shall deal primarily with the views of Śaṅkara and secondarily with the views of post-Śaṅkara Advaitins. Śaṅkara alone has much to say about Īśvara.

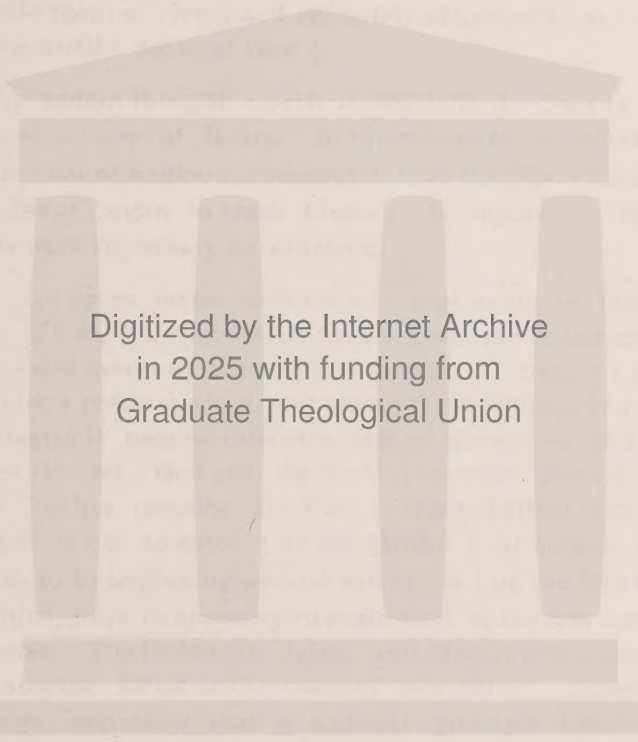
This work, which is based on my doctoral dissertation, arose out of a feeling of dissatisfaction regarding the treatment of the subject in previous works. Not only general works on Indian Philosophy and discussions of Advaita by non-specialists, but even specialists on Advaita tended either to misunderstand Īśvara (e. g., using the term "God" for both Īśvara and the Brahman, and thus imprecisely saying "God is the creator" as well as "God is non-different from the individual soul") or to lightly skip over Īśvara, as if God is an aperitif before one sits down to the non-dual Brahman dinner (i. e., to think that God is unimportant and a discussion of God is meaningless since ultimately God will be realized to be illusory).

Śaṅkara does not stick to one point of view. He seems to contradict himself as he writes variously : as a realist, idealist, theist, dvaitin, viśiṣṭadvaitin, etc. Although his ultimate or esoteric teaching is absolutism or advaita, his provisional or exoteric teaching is also significant. Indeed, assuming the role of a theologian or philosopher of religion only highlights his greatness. Whereas the highest (*pāramārthika*) truth cancels all the lower (*vyāvahārika*) truths, the latter cannot cancel the former. Thus, God is certainly not a contradiction, but is completely coherent with the soteriological emphasis of Advaita : teaching higher and higher truths as steps to the ultimate Truth. Advaita has adopted this method from the *Upaniṣads* and it shows how integrally related spirituality and philosophy are in Advaita.

Basically, this monograph is an abstract of the thesis entitled "The Concept of God (Īśvara) in Advaita Vedānta" for which I was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Indian Philosophy and Religion of the Banaras Hindu University. The references substantiating my arguments, which are not given here, can be found in the original thesis (in the B. H. U. Central Library) or be provided by me upon request. I am extremely grateful to several individuals who helped me in that larger work : (the late) Professor R. K. Tripathi and Dr. L. N. Sharma in Varanasi, Swami Krishnananda in Rishikesh, and Professor Kalidas Bhattacharyya in Santiniketan.

Varanasi
April, 1983

J. D. McMichael



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I. INDIAN IDEAS OF GOD

Advaita Vedānta may be labeled "transpolytheistic trans-theistic absolutism." Polytheism, in the sense of six personal deities worthy of worship (i. e., Śiva, Viṣṇu, etc.), and theism, in the conception of Īśvara, are provisionally accepted (as true from the *vyāvahārika* point of view) and ultimately abandoned (as false from the *pāramārthika* point of view).

In early Indian thought (prior to 500 A. D.), there is no well-developed concept of Īśvara. In the centuries immediately preceding the time of Śaṅkara, commentators on the *Yoga*, *Vaiśeṣika*, and *Nyāya Sūtras* began to teach theism. As opposed to this, Mīmāṃsakas were vigorously anti-theistic.

There are seven major anti-theistic arguments in Indian Philosophy. First, it is impossible to establish the existence of God by any valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Seeing a pot one might infer a potter made it, but seeing the world one cannot infer God created it because inference rests on perception and no one has seen the two (God and the world) together. Second, the theory that God has revealed the Veda is rejected either because the Veda itself is not accepted (by the *nāstikas*) or because the Veda is taken to be beginningless and authorless (by the Mīmāṃsakas). Third, it is unnecessary to posit God as the first cause of the universe. The Buddhists, Jains, and Mīmāṃsakas argue that beginningless *karma* is the cause of everything. Classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga maintains that a material principle (*prakṛti*) evolves by itself (i. e., without being directed by God) to produce the world. Fourth, the anti-theists (i. e., Kumārila, Śāntarākṣita, Kamalaśīla, Vācaspati, Guṇaratna, et al.) argue that the assumed Creator can have no purpose in creating. He cannot create out of self-interest for then God becomes imperfect with a selfish desire to accomplish something by creating. His motive cannot be compassion because the individual souls were not suffering before the (imagined) creation of the world by God and God did not create pleasant surroundings for them. God cannot have created

according to the *karma* of the souls since this type of God becomes dependent on *karma* and it is better to dispense with Him entirely and simply maintain that *karma* is responsible for everything. God's motive cannot be sport (*līlā*) because then He seeks amusement and sadistically enjoys creating a world full of suffering. God simply plays, He is no better than a child. Finally, if it is God's nature (*svabhāva*) to create, then He is not independent because He is bound to create. Fifth, there is evil in the universe supposedly created by a benevolent Lord. Sixth, it is superfluous to posit God as the supervisor of *karma*; an individual's deeds must automatically bear painful or pleasant fruits. Seventh, several schools of Indian Philosophy (*āstika* as well as *nāstika*) argue that God's help is completely unnecessary for achieving liberation (*mokṣa*).

The idea of God was introduced into the very systems which were originally atheistic. Buddhism and Jainism defied the founders and incorporated the gods of Vedic religion.

Sāṃkhya and Mīmāṃsā, like Buddhism and Jainism, are transpolytheistic: the gods are accepted but are not conceived as free and thus not helpful to one striving for *mokṣa*; the gods are neither cosmically important nor the bestowers of the fruits of one's actions. Later exponents of Sāṃkhya (such as Vijñāna Bhikṣu) and Mīmāṃsā (such as Āpadeva, Laugākṣi Bhāskara, and Gāga Bhāṭṭa) established a place for Īśvara.

Although Īśvara does not seem to have been an integral part of Patañjali's Yoga Philosophy (i. e., as a unique, eternally free soul, the omniscient first teacher of all, and indicated by On according to sūtras 1.24-29), Vācaspati increased God's function to include: the teacher of the way to liberation (1.24), the moral governor (1.25), and the efficient cause of all - i. e. the remover of obstacles so that the equilibrium of *prakṛti* is disturbed and there is evolution (4.3). "Īśvara-praṇidhāna" has two meanings to the commentators on the *Yoga-sūtras*, viz., devotion to the Lord (2.45) or dedicating all one's actions to the Lord (2.1, 2.32). As one of the five *niyamas*, Īśvara-praṇidhāna should be cultivated, but one should not think that this is sufficient in itself (i.e., without other *yamas* and *niyamas* and the other steps of *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*) to

attain isolation (*kaivalya*). However, it may result in the aspirant receiving the grace of God and reaching the final goal sooner because obstacles are removed (1.23, 30-31, 3.6).

Nyāya – Vaiśeṣika philosophers (such as Vātsyāyana, Uddyotakara, Vācaspati, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, Śrīdhara, and Udayana) developed the concept of God to such an extent that eventually Īśvara became crucial to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics. God has eight qualities: knowledge (*jñāna* or *buddhi*), desire or will (*icchā*), effort or volition (*prayatna*), etc. He is the omniscient author of the Veda, the supervisor of *karma*, and the efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) of the world (i. e., working on the material cause-atoms). God is merely an architect – not responsible for the very existence of the material cause. Moreover, there is little discussion of God's role in helping man attain liberation.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Tathagata* is the perfect personal being, the compassionate Lord having all auspicious attributes, the supreme object of devotion, and the mediator between man and the Absolute (i. e., *Tathatā* – impersonal Thatness). Unlike Īśvara in Advaita, *Tathagata* is not invested with creative functions. Another approach to understanding the theistic and polytheistic elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism is to consider the *trikaya* doctrine. Whereas the Brahman of Advaita corresponds to *Dharmatā* (which is “above” the three *kāyas* and synonymous with *Tathatā*), Īśvara of Advaita cannot be identified with any of the three *kāyas*. *Dharma-kāya* is the universal person, the first form of the formless Absolute. *Sambhoga-kāya* includes various objects of worship: a glorious heavenly Lord, gods such as Vairocana and Amitābha, goddesses such as Tara, and Bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara. *Nirmāṇa-kāya* is the gross incarnation in this world.

The theism of the (post-Śaṅkara) schools of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta is much more advanced than the theism which has just been elucidated (of Yoga, Nyāya, etc.). “Nirguṇa” does not mean indeterminate, but only free from all despicable qualities (*heyaguṇas*); the Supreme always possesses excellent qualities (*kaljānaguṇas*). Bhagavān has six perfections: knowledge (*jñāna*), power (*śakti*)

strength (*bala*), lordship (*aiśvarya*), might (*virya*), and glory (*tejas*). The Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins, with the exception of Madhva, conceive God as the material (*upādāna*) as well as efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) of the real world. Creation is a real transformation (*pariṇāma*) and the motive for this is sport (*līlā*). The Advaitin cannot accept the view that the Supreme Reality actually transforms or that the world is as real as the Brahman. On the other hand, the Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins deserve credit for beautifully portraying the loving aspect of God - bestowing grace on his devotees.

Among the three major śaiva systems, only śaiva Siddhānta is strongly opposed to the concept of an unqualified (*nirguṇa*) Reality. The Śaivas regard God as engaging in five activities : creation (*syṣṭi*), maintenance (*sthiti*) destruction (*saṃhāra*), concealment (*tirodhāna*), and grace (*anugraha*). Vīra and Kāśmīr Śaivism maintain that God is the material as well as efficient cause of the world; His motive is sport. Śaiva Siddhānta takes God to be only the efficient cause and argues that God creates to free the suffering souls.

Advaita Vedānta was the first school of Indian Philosophy to appreciate the importance of God to metaphysics, epistemology, and religion. Śaṅkara propounded the concept of God as material as well as efficient cause of the world. Epistemologically, God is important as the omniscient first teacher - He reveals scripture [*śruti*] so that men can know the Brahman. Moreover, God is the witness [*sākṣī*] - the basis of all knowledge. Religiously, God is important as the moral governor of the law of *karma*, the perfect being prayed to for help, and a link between man and the Absolute.

II. PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Anselm's Ontological Argument is apriori, i.e., independent of experience. The very thought of God proves the existence of God. The "greatest conceivable being" must exist in reality as well as in the mind because if this existed solely in the mind one could conceive of a *greater* or better [*maius* or *melius*] being which exists

not merely in the mind but in reality as well. This proof was attacked by Gaunilo and Aquinas. Descartes revived the proof by arguing that existence is an attribute worth having and, since God is conceived as possessing all the most excellent attributes, He must also possess existence. Kant demolished this proof. God is defined such that He must exist, just as a triangle must have three angles; but one may reject the subject and the predicate. Moreover, statements about existence are synthetic, not analytic; the predicate is not necessarily implied in the subject. Finally, existence is not a predicate, i.e., an attribute that can be added to a subject.

In Indian Philosophy, Radhakrishnan and N.V. Banerjee find an Ontological Argument in *Yoga Sūtras* 1.24-25 (and commentaries). These thinkers have overlooked the fact that this argument is not apriori - it rests on evidence from experience [i.e., the ascending scale of knowers from the most ignorant to the most wise - omniscient Īśvara]. Nevertheless, a type of Ontological Argument in Yoga is presented in *Kitāb Patañjal*: "the name of God [Om] proves His existence, for there cannot exist anything of which the name exists but not the thing."

Writing on Advaita Vedānta, Deussen and Murti deny any sort of Ontological Argument. However, there are approximations to this proof in Advaita. Śaṅkara stresses that the Brahman should be understood as *sat* to prevent people from thinking it is non-existent or *asat* (TaB 2.6.1, GB 13.12). Moreover, the names "Brahman" and "Bhūman" prove the existence of the named (BSB 1.1.1., 1.3.8- 9, TaB 2.1.1, ChB 7.23.1). The Yoga and Advaita "Ontological Proofs" from names are unconvincing as arguments since one can imagine names for many things (e.g., unicorns, square circles, etc.) which exist solely in thought and not in actuality.

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

The first three of the five [aposteriori] ways of Aquinas are cosmological arguments. The Kinetological Argument proceeds from the fact of motion (observed in this world) to a First Mover not moved by anything else. This is like a string of railway cars moved by an engine. The Aetiological Argument is from caused,

conditioned being to uncaused, unconditioned being (the First Cause of all). This is like the fact that my writing this now depends on my brain, which in turn depends on my existence, which depends on air, food, water, etc. all of which depends on God. The third way, specifically known as the Cosmological Argument, is from contingent (i.e., not necessary) being to non-contingent (i.e., necessary) being. God must exist as a being whose existence is not dependent on any other but, rather, whose existence is involved in its essence. Descartes and Locke argued that because man is aware of his own dependent, finite existence, God must exist as the necessary being on whom all beings depend.

Hume and Kant vehemently attacked the cosmological arguments. First of all, from the finite world one infinite cause cannot be proved. There may be many causes or even if there is one cause this cause need not be unlimited, trans-empirical. Secondly, why must a hierarchy of movers/causes have a highest limit? If one rules out the possibility of an infinite regress, one can stop the regress with the world itself. If it is admitted that one thing (i.e., God) is uncaused, why not say the universe itself is uncaused ? Thirdly, the causal proof maintains that, as the universe is rational, a rational being must exist as its cause; but the universe may be irrational and require no rational cause.

In Indian thought, in the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding the time of Śaṅkara, a brilliant debate raged concerning cosmological arguments between Mīmāṃsā, Buddhist, and Jain atheists and Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Yoga, Śaiva Siddhānta, and Vīra Śaiva theists. First of all, to the objection that there is no need to assume one God made the universe (since many men make a house, many bees make a honeycomb, etc.), the theists reply that assuming many gods violates the law of parsimony – i.e., it is simpler to conceive one God capable of doing this work. Moreover, many gods would have conflicting wills. The second objection, that the cause of all need not be unlimited, omniscient, etc., is met by the theists by pointing out the great variety of effects in this world which can only be caused by an omniscient, omnipotent being (i.e., God). Third, the anti-theists

sk: why do you think things of nature (i.e., rivers, mountains, etc.) are like human products (i.e., a pot made by a potter)? The theistic rejoinder is that things of nature are unconscious and so require a conscious cause. The fourth objection is that the world may not be an effect – it may be self-existent. The theists argue that the world is insentient, impermanent (i. e., coming into and going out of existence), made of parts (*guṇas* or atoms), etc., and, therefore, it must be an effect. Fifthly, the anti-theists maintain that a bodiless spirit cannot act; if God has a body someone else must have produced it (and so on ad infinitum). The theists admit that in the world an agent must be intelligent and have a body, but argue that God, by knowledge (*jñāna*), will (*icchā*), and effort (*prayatna*) can be the cause of all. Just as in man it is the soul, not the body, which causes things to happen, so is the case concerning the world and God.

Śaṅkara's cosmological arguments met all the major anti-theistic objections centuries before other Indian theists made significant steps in this direction. He argues that if there were more than one Īśvara the world could not get on (as unchaotically), as it does now (GB 11.43). It is useless to assume more than one Lord when all the (creative) work of the Lord can be accomplished by a single one (BSB 2.2.44). The cause of all can only be the omniscient, omnipotent Lord and cannot be any being subject to transmigration such as the *jīva* (BSB 1.1.2; 2.1.22, 2.4.20). Analogies to human production [e.g., a potter making a pot] are valid because the world, made up of earth, stones, etc., lacks consciousness [BSB 2.2.1, 2.2.2]. Furthermore, just as an ordinary lamp requires a maker, so the sun and the moon require a maker [BrB 3.8.9.]. Śaṅkara insists that the world is an effect because it is composed of the five elements [*akāśa*, etc.] and depends for its very existence on its cause (BSB 2.1.14). God by His mere will [i. e., without any external means such as a body] creates the world [BSB 2.1.25]. Finally, Śaṅkara rules out the possibility of an infinite regress [BSB 2.3.7, 2.3.9].

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The fifth way of Aquinas proceeds from order in the universe (seen, for example, in the adaptation of things to various ends.

in nature) to an omniscient Designer. Centuries later, Paley argued that just as a watch could not have come about by chance but, rather, must have been designed and made by an intelligent man, so the complexly-designed universe must have been designed and made by the supremely intelligent Lord.

Most of the objections to this proof, raised by Western and Indian thinkers, are similar to the objections to the cosmological arguments. First of all, there is so much diversity of purpose in the universe that it is reasonable to infer a council of many gods is responsible for order. Secondly, even if one designer is assumed, why should the designer of this finite and imperfect world be infinite, perfect God? Thirdly, it is clear that watches, buildings, etc. require intelligent designers, but why should we accept these analogies? The world may be like a plant or tree growing in the wilderness. The fourth point of opposition is that the order in the universe need not be attributed to some designer outside the universe; the universe may be self-explanatory. Fifthly, the idea of final cause reduces God to an imperfect being trying to attain something. The sixth anti-teleological argument is that the presence of evil shows a lack of design. What purpose is served by earthquakes, cancer, etc.?

In Indian Philosophy, Nyāya, Śaiva Siddhānta, and other theists attempted to meet these objections. Utpaladeva argued that this vast universe, with all its parts arranged and adapted to one another and to particular ends, can only have been designed by one omniscient, omnipotent Lord and not by many agents (having limited knowledge and power). Jayanta and Udayana maintain that only the omniscient, omnipotent Lord can know all the purposes of the world and support and sustain the world (in regular rotation, etc.). Again, these two Naiyāyikas argue that analogies to human products (e. g., buildings, chariots, etc. designed by intelligent men) are appropriate since mountains, rivers, etc. (in short, all things in this world) are characterized by design (*sanniveśa*). The theists refuse to accept the view that the universe is self-explanatory: unconscious atoms or *prakṛti* cannot explain order.

Radhakrishnan, Mahadevan, and C. D. Sharma deny any sort of Teleological Argument in Advaita Vedānta. However, one can find the teleological type of reasoning in the writings of Śaṅkara. There are so many examples of design in this universe (e. g., rain falling at certain times of the year, rivers maintaining regular courses, the moon and the planets following fixed courses, etc.) that only one omniscient, omnipotent Īśvara can account for this (TaB 2.8.1, KaB 2.3.2-3, BrB 3.8.9, ChB 8.4.1). Śaṅkara argues that analogies to human designers are relevant: just as in this world things which serve useful purposes such as palaces are made by intelligent architects, so the world as a whole is so well-arranged that only a supremely intelligent Designer can be responsible for it (BSB 2.2.1, AiB 1.1.2, KeVB 3.1). The world is not self-explanatory because there are many examples of things designed by intelligent (human) beings, but the atheist cannot cite any example of any material thing evolving by itself for some purpose. Therefore, it is unreasonable to hold the view that an unintelligent material principle (like *prakṛti* of the Sāṃkhya or even *karma* of the Mīmāṃsakas) can account for the order of the world (BSB 2.2.1, KeVB 3.1).^{*} At best, Śaṅkara's Teleological and Cosmological Arguments establish an omniscient, omnipotent architect and constructor of the world. They do not prove his Īśvara – the material as well as efficient cause of all. This is not a serious problem, however, since Śaṅkara never intended that his arguments would stand independently. These theistic proofs are supplementary ways of establishing the existence of the Lord who has already been “proved” by scripture.

THE HENOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The fourth way of Aquinas proceeds from degrees of value in the universe (i.e., beings having more or less goodness, etc.) to a supreme value (i.e., God as the most in goodness, etc. and consequently, the most in being).

* The last two anti-teleological objections, i. e., the motive of the creator and the problem of evil, are discussed in sections V and VI (below).

There are several problems with this proof. One may speak of degrees of goodness, intelligence, etc., but degrees of being is meaningless - either something exists or it does not. To presuppose that there must be a most that can be conceived is to be guilty of the faults of the Ontological Argument. By taking the Supreme Good, Supreme Truth, etc. to be the source of lesser goods, lesser truths, etc., Aquinas makes his Henological Argument rest on (and fall with) his cosmological proofs. Moreover, God becomes the most in the series - He is a superman but does not transcend the series. Finally, the argument does not prove one God: there may be one god supreme in intelligence, another god supreme in goodness, etc.

In Indian Philosophy, a Henological type of argument is found in *Yoga Sūtras* 1.24-25 where Īśvara is the highest *puruṣa* - the being possessing the maximum degree of intelligence and the source (*bijam*) of all knowing.

In Advaita Vedānta, a graduated series of being is admitted (all within the *vyāvahārika* plane) from minerals to vegetables (i.e., plants, *stamba*, or immovable living beings, *sthāvara*, conceived as having souls) to animals (the supreme of which is man) to beings (such as the gods and finally Brahmā|Hiraṇyagarbha) with more knowledge, power, and bliss (BSB 1.1.4, 1.1.11, 1.3.30, 2.2.44, AiB 2.1.1, 3.1.3, BrB 2.4.9, 3.7.1, KaB 1.3.12, TaB 2.8.1-4, GB 9.4).

THE MORAL ARGUMENT

Kant's Moral Argument has three postulates: man's freedom to act morally or immorally, immortality so that man's virtuous actions are not unrewarded, and God as the rewarder of moral actions.

There is an approximation to the Moral Argument in early Yoga and Nyāya, viz, God must exist as the omniscient judge who rewards and punishes men for their actions. To the anti-theistic objection that the moral law of *karma* operates automatically, the later Naiyāyikas and Śaiva Siddhāntins argue that *karma* is unconscious and cannot bear fruit unless it is directed by a conscious

being. This conscious being cannot be the individual soul (*jīva*) because no one would punish himself.

Śaṅkara maintains that Īśvara is the superintendent of all actions (*karmādhyaṅs*). Actions pass away as soon as they are performed and, thus, have no power to bring about any result in the future. Therefore, it is reasonable to hold God responsible for retribution (BSB 2.3.41, 3.2.38 - 41, BrB 3.8.9, 4.4.24, SvB 6.11).

There are a few defects in the Indian Moral Argument. *Karma* it self is a presupposition: why should one believe that good doers are rewarded and evil doers are punished? Even if one believes in *karma*, he can conceive it as working by itself, controlled by many gods, or controlled by one God. If the last alternative is chosen, the result is a God who is just (i.e., giving men what they deserve) but not merciful.

OTHER ARGUMENTS

In Indian Philosophy there is a "Scriptural Proof": the Veda is a composition which must have had an author; the Veda contains so much wisdom that only the omniscient Lord could have been the author. The fault here is that one can suppose many gods or many men wrote the Veda.

Advaita Vedānta has a "Psychological Proof": everyone is conscious of his own existence and since this self that everyone is conscious of is really non-different from the Absolute, the existence of the Brahman is established (BSB 1.1.1, 1.1.4, 2.3.7). The main flaw with this proof is that the "I" which everyone is aware of as existing need not be imagined to be anything more than the psycho-physical organism; that this "I" is the transmigrating *jīva* or the Ātman (which is non-different from the Brahman) cannot be proved.

Pramāṇas

Perception (*pratyakṣa*) and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*) cannot prove or disprove God since these two sources of knowledge are only useful in empirical matters, i.e., to establish the existence or non-existence of physical things.

Comparison (*upamāna*) means something perceived is compared with something remembered. For example, seeing a *gavaya* one says that it is like a cow. While both the *gavaya* and cow are perceptible, a comparison of God (as creator) with a potter cannot be validly founded inasmuch as God is imperceptible and a potter is perceptible. Furthermore, analogies to human designers and producers may lead one to believe in many gods having limited power rather than one, omnipotent Īśvara – the material as well as efficient cause of all.

Postulation (*arthāpatti*) is the *pramāṇi* by which one supposes something in order to explain an observed fact. For example, seeing that a man is gaining weight although he fasts during the day, one postulates that he eats at night. Śaṅkara postulates Īśvara as the moral governor who rewards and punishes the individuals for their good and bad deeds. The problem with this is that although it is clear that people enjoy and suffer, why should one imagine that this is due to their past actions?

Regarding inference (*anumāna*), Śaṅkara maintains that reasoning has a positive function as an aid to scriptural revelation. It helps one arrive at certitude concerning trans-empirical matters taught in scripture but cannot establish the existence of supra-sensuous things (like God) independently of *śruti*. In addition, reasoning has a negative function in refuting the theories propounded by other schools of philosophy and in removing one's own doubts about the truth of Advaita.

The last valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) is verbal testimony (*śabda* or *śruti*). *Śruti* is necessary because what *śruti* speaks of cannot be known by any other *pramāṇi*.

THE VALUE AND LIMITATION OF PROOFS

Scripture can only give one second-hand or indirect (*parokṣa*) knowledge. The ultimate proof is one's own direct (*aparokṣa*) experience. However, in Advaita the seeker strives to attain realization of the Brahman (the Absolute) not of Īśvara (God). One may take the arguments for the existence of God as pointers to the supra-theistic Brahman. However, can a proof that fails

point to anything ? Arguments for theism tend to be cumulative-like several strands making a strong rope. On the other hand, if each proof is insufficient in itself to prove the existence of God and depends on the other ones the weakness of all of them together is obvious.

The deeply religious man considers the attempt to prove God as ridiculous as trying to prove the sun is shining to someone standing in an open field at noon in June in India. At the other extreme, the theistic arguments are not likely to convince unbelievers to become believers. Anselm, Aquinas, Śaṅkara, Udayana, et al. offered proofs (primarily) to those who have faith but seek understanding – men in a sort of twilight zone wherein faith has been confronted by the darkness of doubts and direct apprehension has not yet dawned.

III. THE NATURE OF GOD

Realizing the limitations of reason, one turns to revelation to comprehend God's nature.

THE REALITY OF THE ATTRIBUTES

Īśvara is omniscient. This knowledge is immediate (i. e., direct) and eternal (i. e., everything of the past, present, and future is known by God simultaneously). Īśvara knows the underlying unity of all things (*sarvajña*) and He also knows the infinite details (*sarvaṇit*). God must be omniscient to fulfill three important roles: the righteous judge who rewards and punishes according to the *karma* of the souls, the creator of the universe, and the revealer of scripture.

The first of the six qualities (*bhāgas*) of Bhagavān is *jñāna*. Īśvara is eternally wise (*nitya-buddha*), i. e., He always knows that there is really no difference between Himself and the Brahman.

Īśvara is omnipotent. This almightiness is most evident in God's cosmic functions: it is latently present during *pralaya*; creation, maintenance, and re-absorption of the universe are not difficult because the Lord's power is unlimited. Īśvara has complete control over *māyā*. Evil need not be taken as something which

opposes God's omnipotence; God may be good and almighty and yet not always provide pleasant situations for men. God "limited" in the sense that He cannot cease to exist.

Three of the *bhāgas* of Bhagavān differ only slightly in meaning, viz., *śakti* (power), *bala* (strength), and *vīrya* (vigor). These three terms are used with regard to creation to illustrate the ease by which God creates.

God is the source of all power (of the gods, the sun, etc).

Īśvara is omnipresent. God pervades or penetrates everything, even ether (*ākāśa*). He is simultaneously in everything everywhere. His center is everywhere and His circumference is nowhere. This is expressed by the terms *sarvagata*, *vibhū*, and *vyāpinam*.

Īśvara is the soul of the universe. When God is conceived as the consciousness in the physical universe, He is called Vaiśvānara or Virāṭ. As the material cause, God is always in all; He does not make the world and then enter it. By thinking of Īśvara as *antaryāmin*, i. e., the inner ruler or spiritual guide in the hearts of men, one may begin to appreciate God's boundless love. This loving relationship far surpasses that of a mother for her son because God is always pregnant with us - it is due to our ignorance (*avidyā*) that we think we were really born. Thus, one might reverse the usual idea of immanence - all are in God (i. e., the lesser are in the greater).

The personal Lord is also transcendent. Although Īśvara is "in" the *vyāvaharika* plane, He is more real than the world and the souls. He is a unique, perfect being.

The final two *bhāgas* of Bhagavān convey the idea of God's majesty (*aishvarya*) and glory (*tejas*). In addition, Īśvara is always pure (*nitya-śuddha*) and always free (*nitya-mukta*). God is never soiled or bound by *māyā/avidyā*.

Īśvara in Advaita is the universal infinite person; this far surpasses the kind of personalness we know (i. e., a finite, limited human person). The gods (Śiva, Viṣṇu, et al.) are

anthropomorphic, individual persons. Īśvara is so perfectly personal (i. e., the one who receives worship and bestows grace) that He may be taken as super-personal (i. e., beyond any idea we have of what is personal). Saṅga Brahman may be called impersonal – an object of meditation; the way the Absolute is understood by the individual. Finally, the Nirguṇa Brahman should not be termed personal or impersonal because the Brahman cannot be described by (mutually) relative qualities.

THE RELATION OF THE ATTRIBUTES

The repetition of the root “all” (*sarva* or *omni*) shows how closely connected the various attributes are. God has all perfections as His essence. The intellectual distinction of qualities does not affect God’s unity.

It is because God is in all that He can know all and have power over all, i. e., omnipresence is the presupposition of omniscience and omnipotence. As creator, God must be omniscient (not an unconscious force like *pradhāna* but an intelligent architect who has a clear plan when names and forms are unevolved but about to be evolved), omnipotent (capable of creating), and omnipresent (the material as well as efficient cause).

One can make a subtle distinction between three terms. “Inner ruler” (*antaryāmin*) means a personal Lord in all rules all. This is not brought out by “omnipresent” (*sarvagata*). “Immanence” is a term relative to transcendence; both apply to Īśvara but neither applies to the Brahman.

THE FALSITY OF THE ATTRIBUTES

Omniscience can apply only to a being who is related with the world and the souls, not to Being-in-Itself. The Brahman is not aware of any other, but is Consciousness Itself. Thus, the Brahman may perhaps be called *svarūpa-jñāna*, not *sarvajña*.

Omnipotence is ultimately false inasmuch as the Brahman is not active, creative; the Brahman is changeless. How can one speak of power over the world and the souls when the truth is non-duality (*advaita*) ?

The Brahman cannot be described by relative terms, like "good", "pure", "free", etc. Moreover, the Brahman cannot be called "personal" or "impersonal" but perhaps "apersonal".

Īśvara may be beginningless (like *māyā/avidyā*), but comes to an end, so to speak, for the liberated man (*jīvan - mukta*), who realizes his own true nature (as the *Ātman/Brahman*). Īśvara is *pariṇāmi-nitya*, changingly eternal. The Brahman cannot be thought of in terms of time at all. The Brahman is *anāśrita-nitya*, unchangingly eternal.

Even omnipresence must ultimately be given up as false because a subtle duality is implied – one thing pervading another. Nevertheless, conceiving God as omnipresent may be advantageous to the seeker of the final realization of non-duality: if the same Reality is in everything, then there is nothing other than That – there is no "all" to be pervaded.

"Neti, neti" denies every type of relativity: the Brahman is not immanent, not transcendent, etc. Attributes express the incidental (or non-essential) nature of the Brahman. Lordliness (*īśvaratvam*) itself is due to ignorance. When all the opposite qualities cancel each other out, the qualified Īśvara "becomes" the unqualified Brahman. "*Svabhāva*" means characteristics such as omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternally pure, enlightened, and free are the inherent nature of Īśvara (not of the Brahman).

THE DESCENT (*AVATĀRA*) OF GOD

The Hindu doctrine of *avatāra*, which is not present in the Veda but first appears in the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, is possibly an offshoot of the Buddhist theory of former Buddhas and/or the Jain theory of former *tīrthaṅkaras*.

In all his writings, Śaṅkara only discusses the theory of *avatāra* in a few brief passages in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*.

The Christian doctrine of incarnation (from the Latin "to make flesh") may be distinguished from the Hindu doctrine of *avatāra* (from the Sanskrit "descent") on five grounds. First, the

Incarnation of God as Jesus Christ is considered unique whereas many *avatāras* are accepted by Hinduism. Second, Jesus Christ was an historical person whereas the historicity of the *avatāras* is dubious. Third, Hindu thought has no parallel to the (real) vicarious suffering of Christ (for the sake of all men). Fourth, Christ is considered to be fully God as well as fully man, but "*avatāra*" implies that the descent is less than God. Fifth, Christian Theologians (unlike Hindu Theologians) argue that only the moral attributes of God (such as goodness, love, etc.) are embodied in the Christ.

The schools of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta, as opposed to the Śaiva systems, highly value the theory of *avatāra*. They explain that when the *Gītā* says that the Lord is born by His own *māyā* it means "by His *jñāna*" or "by His *śakti*". The *avatāra* is real, not illusory.

The Advaita view is that an *avatāra* takes birth by his own free choice, not because of his past *karma*. The *avatāra* is always perfect; he does not attain wisdom. He merely wears the body like a suit of clothes.

The *avatāra* comes into the world to re-establish moral order (*dharmā*). That he comes "from age to age" means there is no limit to the number of times God comes. If one is a fool and has not prepared himself through *sādhana*, he will not recognize the *avatāra*. God comes "down" to bring men "up"—i. e., through words and actions he teaches the way to live a divine life. He sets an example for all men to aspire to imitate. Although this may seem quite serious to us, incarnating is mere sport (*līlā*) for God.

As the mediator between God and man, the God-man illustrates the merciful love of God for man. He reminds us that "God is with us" (i. e., this is the translation of the Hebrew Immanuel).

In Advaita, the *avatāra* is extremely significant from the *vyāvahārika* point of view (wherein God, the souls, and the world are all taken to be real). Ultimately, from the *pāramārthika* point of view, there can be no "birth" of God. When the Advaitin

applies the concept of *māyā* to the theory of *avatāra*, he hopes to make the spiritual seeker (*adhikāri*) realize this: God never really takes any body (just as He never really creates the world), though, by *māyā*, He appears to do so. Thus, like the world, souls, and God, the *avatāra* is only empirically true. Ultimately, there is no other who has strayed from *dharma* and requires instruction in the way to *mokṣa*; there is the non-dual, ever-free Reality.

IV. ĪŚVARA AND THE BRAHMAN

Śaṅkara sometimes uses the terms “Īśvara” and “the Brahman” synonymously to teach that the “two” are the same non-dual Absolute (looked at from two points of view). Nevertheless, there are several places where Śaṅkara distinguishes Īśvara and the Brahman. In post-Śaṅkara Advaita the two are clearly differentiated.

TERMINOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

Īśvara can be thought about. One adopts the method of affirmation (*viñ eminentiae*). Īśvara is conceivable, knowable, comprehensible, namable, describable, teachable, determinable, etc. Īśvara is *sa-guṇī*, i. e. qualified or conditioned. Occasionally Īśvara is called “apara Brahman” to indicate that Īśvara is not the Ultimate Reality. Īśvara is the highest reality for human thought. Īśvara is conceived as having all auspicious qualities to their maximum degree. He is the supreme Lord of the world and the individual souls. Really, from the *pāramārthika* point of view, Īśvara is an object of ignorance (*avidyā*).

The Brahman is beyond thought. The method of negation (*viñ negationis*) is applied. The Brahman is inconceivable, unknowable (except by a unique type of Knowledge - Intuition), uncomprehensible, unnamable, undescribable, unteachable, undeterminable, etc. The Brahman is *nir-guṇī*, i. e., unqualified or unconditioned. It may be called “para Brahman” to express that it is the Ultimate Reality. The Brahman is the Reality which transcends human thought. The Absolute can only be spoken about as the negation of all qualities (i. e., *avyayam*, *akṣaram*, etc.) The Brahman has no relation with the world and the individual souls.

It is the object, so to speak (though really there is no duality of subject and object), of Knowledge (*jñāna*).

COSMOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

Īśvara is related with the changing, empirical world. He is the supreme being in the *vyāvahārika* plane. Īśvara is also related with *māyā*. He is *sopādhika*, but since the *upādhi* of *māyā* is self-imposed, it may be called the Lord's own conditioning power (*śakti*). Īśvara "goes out" to create, maintain, and destroy the world. Thus, He is dynamic. From the cosmic (*vyāvahārika*) point of view, the theories of *pariṇāma - vāda* and *vivarta - vāda* are provisionally accepted (as steps) to explain the existence of the world.

The Brahman is not related with the world. It is the sole reality in the *pāramārthika* plane. There is really nothing such as *māyā* to be related with. Therefore, the Brahman is *nirupādhika*. The Brahman "remains in" - i. e., does not "go out" to create, etc. It is immovable or changeless Being. From the acosmic or supra - cosmic (*pāramārthika*) point of view, the truth is *ajāti-vāda*, i. e., there is no world which is caused/created in any way whatsoever.

The amount of "reality" accorded to Īśvara varies in the schools of post-Saṅkara Advaita. The Bhāmati thinkers, maintaining that *avidyā* resides in the *jīva*, take Īśvara to be as illusory as the world. The Vivaraṇa philosophers, arguing that *avidyā* resides in the Brahman, while fully admitting that Īśvara is ultimately illusory, give more empirical reality to God (i.e., by emphasizing that Īśvara is supreme in the *vyāvahārika* plane - "more real" than the world and the souls).

AXIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

Īśvara is personal - He appears as anthropomorphic deities (Viṣṇu, Śiva, et al.) having concrete form (*sākāra*), masculine or feminine gender, etc. Here there is self consciousness because Īśvara as the Self (or subject) confronts the world as not-Self (or object).

The Brahman is not personal, but is the abstract formless (*nirākāra*) Reality which has no gender (not even neuter). This is Pure Consciousness (or Awareness) Itself, not self-consciousness because there is no duality.

The Bhāmatt school regards the forms of Īśvara (Viṣṇu, Śiva, et al.) as convenient fictions created by men to be of use in the religious life of dull-witted persons. On the other hand, the Vivaraṇa system thinks these forms are created by Īśvara and, therefore, as real as the (objective|public) world.

Īśvara is the object of relative experience or *avidyā*. The exoteric or practical teaching of Advaita is theism. Īśvara is worshipped as other than oneself. He is the mediator between the world/souls and the Absolute. The “level” of Īśvara may be taken as a step to the Brahman corresponding to *śaivikalpa-samādhi*.

The Brahman is the “object” of knowledge (*vidyā* or *jñāna*). The esoteric or pure teaching of Advaita cannot be labelled as any “ism”. The Brahman is known as not-different from oneself. There are really no steps; *mokṣa*, or in other words the Brahman, is always attained. The final realization of the Ātman/Brahman has been compared to *nirvikalpa-samādhi*.

THE TWO LAKṢAṆAS

The *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* is the non-essential or incidental definition of the Brahman as the omniscient, omnipotent creator, moral governor, etc. This definition indicates but does not constitute a thing. For example, “white house” distinguishes one house from others, but the particular house in question may continue to exist without being white.

The *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* is the essential definition or bare nature of the Ātman/Brahman. “Sat-cit-ānanda” denies of the Brahman the predicates *asat* (non-being), *acit* (insentience), and *duḥkha* (suffering). None of the three terms (*sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*) should be considered more important than the other two. This is like “brick house” – if the specific house ceases to be brick it will simultaneously cease to be.

Exponents of Advaita occasionally make a "lower"—"higher" distinction. The Lord, defined by the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*, *saguṇa*, *apara*, penultimate reality, a step to liberation, etc., is taken to be lower. The Absolute, defined by the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*, *nirguṇa*, *para*, Ultimate Reality, Liberation Itself, etc., is regarded as higher. The lower-higher distinction may be made, but one must remember that there is really no duality. It is based on the difference of *vyāvahārika* and *pāramārthika* planes and lower and higher scriptural texts. This distinction is logical and provisional, not ontological and actual.

CRITICISMS CONSIDERED

Non-Advaitins raised several objections against the distinction between *Īśvara* and the Brahman. These may be listed and replied to as follows :

1. Two Brahman contradicts *a-dvaita*.

Reply : It is One Reality (seen) from two points of view; there is no real second principle.

2. If there is One Reality, how did the other/lower come about ?

Reply : It is due to *māyā* : the Brahman appears to be, but never really becomes, *Īśvara*.

3. How can one Reality have and not have qualities ?

Reply : Reality has no qualities; It only seems to have qualities (from the *vyāvahārika* point of view).

4. How many realities do you accept ? Are there four : Brahman, *Īśvara*, *Hiranyagarbha*, and *Virāt* ?

Reply : There is one Reality. The Vaiṣṇava monotheists (who raise this objection) may be also accused of accepting many realities : *vyāhas*, *avatāras*, *arcās*, etc.

5. *Īśvara* is not a concession to ignorance (as Bhāmati thinkers claim).

Reply : Realization of the *Ātman*|Brahman will prove it is.

6. If God is not supreme, He cannot be significant.

Reply : God is very important until final liberation (*mokṣa*).

7. It is meaningless to posit an Īśvara and later deny Him.

Reply : Īśvara is meaningful in the *vyāvahārika* plane : a useful step since most men will not immediately accept the Brahman.

8. A God subject to cosmic nescience (*māyā*) is no God at all.

Reply : Īśvara controls *māyā* - it does not impair Him. Īśvara is omniscient (*nitya-buddha*).

9. *Nirguṇa*, as ultimate, is relative to the penultimate *saguṇa*.

Reply : The Brahman is not relative because It can exist without Īśvara (but not vice versa). Inasmuch as Reality is non-dual, there is no other to be related with.

10. Why should we believe that the Brahman is at a higher level ?

Reply : Realizing the Brahman at the *pāramārthika* level cancels the reality of this (*vyāvahārika*) level (just as realizing a rope as a rope cancels the reality of it as a "snake" - i. e., at the *prātibhāsika* plane).

11. One cannot worship the Brahman, and if Īśvara is hypothetical there is no point in worshipping Īśvara.

Reply : Worshipping Īśvara is helpful to erase the ego; Īśvara is no more or less hypothetical than one's own individuality is. Finally, one must give up Īśvara (and individuality) as illusory to "get" Reality.

12. *Nirguṇa* Brahman is unacceptable : *nirguṇatva* itself is a *gūṇa*; there can be no substance without attributes. *Nirguṇa* only means devoid of bad qualities, not all qualities.

Reply : Denial of all determinations is not itself a determination. There is only Substance - attributes are falsely superimposed on It. The Brahman is nothing we can conceive - It is not nothing.

13. Why should we think that scripture (*śruti*) teaching a creator is less true than *śruti* teaching Nirguṇa Brahman ? Why would *śruti* negate the Saguṇa Brahman that it itself teaches ?

Reply : Advaita recognizes the importance of *saguṇa śruti*s as steps helpful to us.

ĪŚVARA DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER NON-ABSOLUTE REALITIES

Unlike Īśvara, the personal creator, moral governor, etc., Saguṇa Brahman is not (necessarily) personal. Saguṇa Brahman is the way the Nirguṇa Brahman is conceived (i. e., as having attributes) by man when he practices meditation. Some Advaitins take Saguṇa Brahman to express the combination of the Brahman and *māyā* or the combination of Īśvara and the world. Others maintain that this is a general term for the various ways the Brahman appears "with qualities" - i. e., as Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha, Virāt, etc.

Omniscience is of paramount importance to Īśvara-sākṣin. One might think of Īśvara-sākṣin as "higher" than Īśvara and "lower" than the Brahman (but the three are really not different). Whereas for Śaṅkara being a witness is simply one of the many roles God plays, in post-Śaṅkara Advaita Īśvara-sākṣin (or *sākṣin*) became significant in its own right. Sarvajñātman, Prakāśātman, Vidyāraṇja, and Citsukha seem to identify *sākṣi* with the Brahman. On the other hand, Surēśvara, Rāmādvaya et al. take *sākṣi* to be an aspect of Īśvara. Dharmarāja Adhvarin maintains that Īśvara is Consciousness determined by *māyā*; *māyā* is a *viśeṣaṇa* here, like the blackness of a crow. Īśvara-sākṣin is Consciousness only associated with *māyā*; *māyā* is an *upādhi* here, like a black crow perching on a house. We cannot agree with those writers who try to make Īśvara-sākṣin the Ultimate Reality because it is related with the world and the souls. Īśvara-sākṣin may be considered to be more introverted and passive than Īśvara.

Apara Brahman is not a technical term and is loosely used to refer to various "lower" forms of the Brahman : Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha, etc.

The distinctions between Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha, and Virāṭ not sharply drawn in early Advaita, became crystallized in late Advaita. The cosmic difference is that Īśvara is the unmanifested (*avyakta*) state with the potential for manifestation, like a clear canvas (ready to be painted on). Hiraṇyagarbha is the partially or half manifested state, like a canvas with lines sketched in. Hiraṇyagarbha is the cosmic subtle body – the totality of all subtle bodies. When identified with cosmic intelligence (*jñāna*), it is called Hiraṇyagarbha, and when identified with cosmic activity (*krīyā-śakti*), it is called Sūtra or Prāṇa. Hiraṇyagarbha is the first born of God, but is not born by past actions. He is the source of Virāṭ. Virāṭ is the fully manifested state, like a canvas with everything fully painted in. Virāṭ is the cosmic gross body – the totality of all gross bodies. He is also called Prajāpati and Vaiśvānara. Virāṭ is the source of the gods. The process of manifestation or *vyakta* goes from Īśvara through Hiraṇyagarbha to Virāṭ, while de-manifestation or *pralaya* is the opposite process.

The microcosmic difference is that Īśvara corresponds to the state of sleep (*suṣupti* or *prājñā*) and the *ānandamaya-kośa*. Hiraṇyagarbha corresponds to the state of dream (*taijasa*) and the *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, and *vijñānamaya kośas*. Finally, Virāṭ corresponds to the waking state (*viśva*) and the *annamaya-kośa*.

Regarding stages of attainment, some Advaitins teach that freed souls (*jīvan-muktas*) attain the level of Īśvara until all reach this level (*sarva-mukti*) and then all merge, so to speak, into the Brahman. Brahmāloka or Satyaloka, the realm of Hiraṇyagarbha, may be reached by meditation/worship and ritual works. The world of Virāṭ is also described as a place where one experiences the pleasant results of his past actions but (like Brahmāloka) is not (eternal) freedom from the cycle of repeated births and deaths (*saṃsāra*).

In Advaita Vedānta, the gods (*devas*) are ‘higher’ than ordinary men (because they have more knowledge and power), but ‘lower’ than *jīvan-muktas* (because they are still in *saṃsāra*). The gods have various powers, but all this power depends on Īśvara. Although they enjoy a pleasant, comparatively long

existence in a heavenly sphere, they are not free. Nevertheless, they are qualified to pursue the spiritual discipline (*sādhana*) which leads, so to speak, to liberation (*mokṣa*). The gods are real from the *vyāvahārika* point of view, but ultimately are illusory.

IS ADVAITA SECTARIAN ?

By writing hymns to several deities (Viṣṇu, Śiva, et al.), Śaṅkara proved that he was not sectarian. However, Śaṅkara and other Advaitins may have had a certain predilection for one particular name and form superimposed on the nameless, formless Brahman.

There were Vaiṣṇava Advaitins who pre-dated Śaṅkara and the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* has elements of Advaita. Śaṅkara commented on the (Vaiṣṇava) *Bhagavaagītā*, which was not even considered scripture (*śruti*). Although Śaṅkara criticizes Vaiṣṇavas (i. e., Pāñcarātras) on a few points, he accepts several of their doctrines: God is the material as well as efficient cause of the world; creation is due to sport (*līlā*), etc. In Śaṅkara's writings there are many other examples of Vaiṣṇavism: the final goal of man is the highest place of Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu resides in the *śalagrāma* stone, etc.

Post-Śaṅkara Advaitins, such as Sureśvara, Sarvajñātman, Totakācārya, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Dharmarāja Adhvarin, Kṛṣṇa Mīśra, et al., have Vaiṣṇava references in their works. However, because of the defence of Śaivism by Appayya Dīkṣita and the fact that non-Advaita Vedāntins (like Rāmānuja, Madhva, et al.) were Vaiṣṇavas, Advaita Vedānta became associated with Śaivism.

The true Advaita position is that one may show single-minded devotion to Viṣṇu, Śiva, or any other *iṣṭa-devatā* without taking this to be the only true name and form of God. Indeed, the deeper one goes in his devotion the fewer differences will one find with a man worshipping another *iṣṭa-devatā*.

V. GOD AND THE WORLD

Causality is one of the most important problems of philosophy. The Indian treatment of this topic is not influenced by the

concept of time (as the Western approach to this problem is)
 For example, souls are conceived as beginningless, uncreated
 Moreover, Indian thinkers maintain that creation is a recurring
 rather than a unique, event.

Some Indian systems of philosophy question the very idea of causality. Cārvāka propounds a materialistic naturalism (*svabhāva-vāda*) or accidentalism (*yadṛcchā-vāda*). Mīmāṃsā argues that the world is never created – it has always been as it is. Jainism straddles the fence of causation with its *sadasatkārya-vāda*, contending that the essence of the cause and the effect is the same but the mode is new. Mādhyamika refuses to accept any theory of causation and shows the faults of all (four) *kārya-vādas*.

Asatkārya-vāda

The Buddhist *saṃghāta-vāda* and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika *arambha-vāda* are criticized by the Advaitin. If the effect does not pre-exist in the cause (before it is produced), there is no intimate relation between cause and effect and anything should arise from anything : e. g., curds could be produced out of water, clay, etc. and need not only come from milk. Furthermore, if the effect does not pre-exist in the cause then it is as meaningless to say that the effect originates as it is to say that something non-existent (e. g., a barren woman's son) is born.

Satkārya-vāda of Sāṃkhya : *Pradhāna-pariṇāma-vāda*

The Sāṃkhya theory is equally unsatisfactory. *Pradhāna* is not conscious and cannot be the cause of the whole world (without being controlled by an intelligent being) because useful things in the world (e. g., houses) are made by intelligent workers. Sāṃkhya is unable to explain the how and why of the initial activity of *pradhāna* (i. e., when the equilibrium of the *guṇas* is disturbed); or, if *pradhāna* is always active there can never be dissolution of the world or liberation of the souls (*puruṣas*). The analogy proposed to illustrate the cooperation of *puruṣa* and *pradhāna* is faulty: a lame man and a blind man can work together because the lame man can speak (unlike inactive *puruṣa*) and the blind man can understand (unlike unconscious *pradhāna*).

Satkārya-vāda of Vedānta : *Īśvara-pariṇāma-vāda*

Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Vallabha et al. maintain that the world is a real transformation of God (who is taken, on the basis of scripture, to be the material as well as efficient cause of all). Advaita provisionally accepts the reality of the world admitting that the effect (world) is as real as the cause (God), but that the cause is superior to the effect (i. e., *Īśvara* is supreme in the *vyāvahārika* plane) because the effect depends for its existence on the cause, the cause is more permanent than the effect, etc.

The world pre-exists in God before creation and is withdrawn into God at the end of each creation (i. e., at the time of *pralaya*). The standard Vedāntic position is that the Creator is more than His creation and that He exists independently of it. However, more idealistically inclined Advaitins maintain that creation is the essential nature of *Īśvara* - He must always be active and, thus, always be related with the world. The advantage of this (second) theory is that, by showing the mutual relativity of cause and effect, it may help one pass on to the non-causal, non-relative Brahman.

Īśvara, as the material and efficient cause of the world, must change according to *pariṇāma-vāda*. Passages which speak of an unmoved mover really aim at leading one to the understanding of a changeless Ultimate Reality. Advaita Vedānta starts by teaching something familiar (i. e., the reality of the world, the *pariṇāma* of *Īśvara*, etc.) and then proceeds to teach something unfamiliar (i. e., the apparent nature of the world, *vivarta* etc.).

MOTIVE OF CREATION

As long as Advaita teaches transformation (*pariṇāma-vāda*) and not transfiguration (*vivarta-vāda*) it must deal with the motive of creation. Compassion is unacceptable because even if God acts altruistically for the sake of the souls (*jīvas*), He cannot be perfect. Creation cannot be due to the past *karma* of the souls because this makes *Īśvara* bound to create in certain ways (and not independent). The third explanation is that it is simply God's nature (*svabhāva*) to create, just as it is man's nature to breathe.

But then God to be God must create (which is inadmissible traditional theism).

Vedāntins subscribe to the doctrine of sport (*līlā*) as taught in the *Brahma Sūtras* (2.1.33-“lokavattu līlākaivalyam”). There are several atheistic objections to this doctrine which are met by the Advaitin. First of all, there is the problem of evil: God must be sadistic to create a world with so much suffering (out of sport). The Advaitin replies that anyone obsessed with evil cannot comprehend the idea of creation due to *līlā*. *Līlā* is combined with *māyā*: the world drama, which may appear to some as a tragedy rather than a comedy, is fiction.

Second, if creation is God's sport, then why would He destroy the world? The reply is that destruction too is God's *līlā*; it is only ignorant men who take it as something dreadful.

Third, if God creates to play then He needs to amuse Himself just as one plays a sport because it makes him happy. The Advaitin points out that *līlā* does not mean for fun but from Bliss (*Ānanda*). The main point of *līlā-vāda* is that Īśvara does not need anything when He creates. It is like a musician playing not for himself, not for others, but simply playing because what is within is joyfully flowing out.

Fourth, if God does not seek anything but simply plays then His action is like that of a child or a lunatic. The Advaitin would reply that God's sport may be compared to the innocent, joyful playing of a child, but it is organized innocence, not naivete. Again, there is nothing wrong with taking this to be like religious madness: e. g. the madness of Caitanya as he sang and danced out of joy.

Fifth, the theory of *līlā* is attacked for being bankrupt on the thought inasmuch as no purpose for creation is posited. It may be poetic, but it is not rational. The Advaitin believes that there cannot be any correct answer to the question “why has the world been created?” because the question presupposes that there has been a real creation (which is not the case). The theory of *līlā* serves the practical value of making one give up all rational

planations of creation. *Līlā* and *māyā* go together and push one to the next step: *vivarta-vāda*.

Satkāraṇa-vāda of Advaita : *Vivarta-vāda*

Advaita Vedānta may precisely be called *satkāraṇa-vāda* rather than *satkārya-vāda* because it emphasizes that only the cause (*kāraṇa*) really exists and that all effects (*kāryas*) are illusory appearances.

Vivarta-vāda is the theory of apparent change or illusory causation; there are still two terms, but the effect is not as real as the cause. There is no real change in the cause; there is a transfiguration, not a transformation. Śaṅkara never uses the term "*vivarta*" in this specific sense, while Bhartṛhari, Maṇḍana, Vācaspati, Padmapāda et al. do.

Vivarta-vāda is the second step in our discovery of the Brahman through an analysis of causality. Due to the fact that *vivarta-vāda* maintains that the world is an unreal manifestation or illusory transfiguration of the Brahman, it helps one arrive at the third step - *ajāti-vāda* - wherein there is no discussion of the world, causality, etc., but there is only the non-dual Brahman.

According to *vivarta-vāda* the world appears just as a snake appears where there is actually a rope. Moreover, just as a real rope never really changes into an illusory snake or even has any real relation with the "snake" at all, so is the case between the Brahman and the world. Cases of such illusions (as the *pratibhāsika* snake) being cancelled by the experience of what is commonly known as reality (i.e., the *vyāvahārika* rope) may lead one to consider that this (*vyāvahārika*) world itself may be an illusion. The superimposed (snake or world) is regarded as true until the basis of the superimposition (rope or the Brahman, respectively) is known.

To explain how the multiform creation appears when the truth is the non-dual, changeless Brahman, Advaita must propound the theory of *vivarta*. Since the world (i.e., the superimposed) has no existence of its own independent of the Brahman (i.e., the basis of superimposition), and since it is

negated by knowledge of the Brahman, it cannot be real. Yet the world cannot be unreal either because the unreal (e.g., barren woman's son) never appears. The world is an appearance which may be negated. Thus, it is called false (*mithyā*) or inexpressible (*anivacanīya*).

Māyā

Etymologically, *māyā* may be derived from "mā" meaning "to measure" (i.e., the immeasurable Brahman appears as if measured) or it is "that which" (*ya*) "is not" (*mā*) - i.e., the world appears but is not real.

Īśvara is the Lord of *māyā* - it is His *śakti*, under His control, and it no more deludes Him than a magician's magic power deludes him. *Māyā* as *vikṣepa śakti* is positive - it projects or creates the world of names and forms. *Māyā* as *āvaraṇa śakti* is negative - it obscures or veils the true nature of Reality.

Post-Śāṅkara Advaitins presented several theories of how *māyā* is "related with" the Brahman. Sarvajñātman argues that the Brahman Itself is the material cause (*upādāna*) of all through the intermediary (*dvāra*) *māyā*. Vācaspati maintains that the Brahman is the cause of all and *māyā* is the auxiliary cause or "helping factor" (*sahakāri*). Ānandānubhava, Dharmarāja, and others point out that the world has elements of changeless Being (*sat*) and changing matter (*jādyā*) and, thus, should be considered a *vivarta* of the Brahman and a *pariṇāma* of *māyā*. Padmapāda, Prakāśātman and others give more substantiality to *māyā* than Sarvajñātman and Vācaspati do, regarding the Brahman in association with the positive power of *māyā* (i.e., this association being known as Īśvara) as the cause of the world. Prakāśānanda argues that *māyā* alone is the cause of all; as the ground (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of *māyā*, the Brahman may (only) figuratively be called the cause.

Post-Śāṅkara Advaitins had trouble with the concept of the pure, conscious Brahman being the material cause of the impure, non-conscious world, and so gave increasing importance to *māyā* as the centuries passed. Moreover, the more opponents attacked

the *māyā* doctrine, the more important did *māyā* become as Advaitins sought to defend it. Some modern "Advaitins" have even gone as far as to argue that *māyā* is the material (*upādāna*) cause of all and Īśvara is the efficient (*niṣṭā*) cause.

Māyā is inexpressible (*anirvacanīya*) : it can neither be called non-existent (*asat*) like the barren woman's son nor existent (*sat*) like the Brahman.

Ajāti-vāda : THE FINAL "VIEW" OF ADVAITA

Ajāti-vāda carries *satkārya* (*pariṇāma*) *vāda* and *satkāraṇa* (*vivarta*) *vāda* to their logical conclusion. If the effect pre-exists in the cause, why should one believe that the effect ever really exists as something new or different outside (or apart from) the cause ? Again, if the cause alone is real and the effect, which completely depends on the cause, is illusory, then how can one speak of a "cause" changing into or having any real relation with any effect ?

Gauḍapāda, the pre-Śaṅkara Advaitin, refuses to accept that anything is ever really caused. Whereas Gauḍapāda only propounds the "highest" teaching of *ajāti-vāda*, Śaṅkara, aware that most people cannot understand this, presents three grades of teaching: the real creation of the world by Īśvara, the appearance of the world on the Brahman, and finally the truth of the uncreative (*ajata*), non-dual (*advaita*) Absolute. While most of the major post-Śaṅkara Advaitins agree with Śaṅkara in presenting the final "view" of *ajāti-vāda* along with other cosmological theories, Suresvara and Prakāśananda may be considered truer to Gauḍapāda.

VI. GOD AND MAN

By "man" what is meant here is *jīva*, i.e., the individual soul, ruler of the body, lord of the senses, enjoyer of the fruits of actions, the beginningless transmigrating being. The individual soul "wears" three bodies (*śarīras*): gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*śukṣma*), and causal (*kāraṇa*).

There is really only one Ātman/Brahman. Superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is mistaking the body (e.g., "I am fat"), senses (e.g., "I am blind"), mind (e.g., "I am brilliant"), etc. for the *jīva*. The final superimposition is mistaking the soul (*jīva*, as e.g. "I am accumulating good *karma* and will be reborn in favorable circumstances") for the Self (Ātman, which is beyond all *karma* and never transmigrates).

In its non-ultimate or *vyāvahārika* teaching, Advaita accepts the existence of many *jīvas* (as well as the existence of Īśvara and the world). God, the world, and the souls are all illusory or false when one realizes the Ātman/Brahman, but are real or true until that time.

The instruction that the soul is part of God is practically useful to curb the ego (since one comprehends his littleness as compared to the whole, i. e., God) and to become aware of the same underlying essence (i. e., *Cit*) in both. However, the idea of part-whole is to be taken figuratively, not literally.

When Śaṅkara speaks of *jīva* as the Ātman (or Īśvara as the Brahman) it is his practical, spiritual, or positive teaching. It may help the individual overcome his individuality by considering his true spiritual essence. This is like blowing up a balloon bigger and bigger until the rubber finally bursts and the air that was expanding inside (i.e., *jīva*) merges, so to speak, with the air outside (i.e., Ātman). This is the way of de-isolation, breaking down the walls of the ego and uniting with all.

When Śaṅkara distinguishes *jīva* from the Ātman (or Īśvara from the Brahman) it is his theoretical, philosophical, or negative teaching. The Absolute (Ātman/Brahman) is non-dual, non-relative, etc., and so the individual soul and God are distinguished from this Reality to explain bondage, creation of the world, etc. One deeply inquires "Who am I?" and discriminates what is not the Self (Ātman) until he realizes that even *jīva* (as *jīva*, i. e., subject to *karma* and rebirth) is not the Ātman.

According to Advaita, there is never really any difference between the Ātman and the Brahman, but there are (provisional) differences between *jīva* and Īśvara.

WAYS OF DISTINGUISHING ĪŚVARA AND JĪVA

The primary distinction, which is the basis of all other distinctions, is by *upādhis* (limiting adjuncts). Īśvara is associated with excellent (*niratiśaya*) *upādhis*: *māyā*, *vikṣepa ajñāna*, or pure *prakṛti* (in which *sattva* is dominant). Īśvara creates the external or public world. He controls *māyā*. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. We are mediately aware of God (through reason and revelation). The volition of God is true – it always must be fulfilled. Inasmuch as the Lord does not identify with any body, He does not suffer (in this world or by being reborn). He has no particular likes and dislikes and is beyond good and evil. The Lord is the witness who rewards and punishes men according to their *karma*. Īśvara is free from four *kośas*, but may be identified with the *ānandamaya-kośa* (sheath of bliss).

The individual soul (*jīva*) is associated with inferior (*nihīna*) *upādhis*: *avidyā*, *āvaranā ajñāna*, or impure *prakṛti* (in which *rajas* and *tamas* are dominant). The *jīva* creates the internal or private world. He is controlled by *māyā*. He has limited knowledge and power and is limited to one body. We are immediately aware of our own existence (as “I exist”). The volition of the soul is false – it is not necessary that it be fulfilled. The *jīva* identifies with the body and so suffers (in this world and by transmigration). He develops likes and dislikes and acts in ways which may be called good or evil. The *jīva* is the agent who is rewarded or punished according to his *karma*. The *jīva* is wrapped up in all five sheaths (*kośas*).

THE REAL NON-DIFFERENCE OF ĪŚVARA AND JĪVA

The difference between Īśvara and *jīva* is only from the *vyavahārika* point of view, i. e., the difference is true to one still living at this lower plane who is, in short, ignorant. Once the *upādhis* or superimposed attributes are removed, the one Reality (*Ātman/Brahman*) remains as the substance/essence of both. Īśvara in His real nature, as the (non-creating, etc.) Brahman, is not different from the *jīva* in his real nature, as the (non-transmigrating, etc.) *Ātman*. From the *pāramārthika* point of

view, there can be no relation between God and the individual soul because both *Īśvara* as *Īśvara* and *jīva* as *jīva* are (ultimately) false, and there are no longer two things to relate.

AVACCHEDA-VĀDA

Post-Śaṅkara Advaitins divided because they pressed two analogies, employed by Śaṅkara to teach that *jīvatva* is not real to absurd limits.

Avaccheda-vāda is the theory of limitation. Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara developed the analogy of limited space (*ākāśa*) to teach : (1) The non-dual Brahman/Ātman appears as the Lord and the souls due to *upādhis*, just as the unlimited Space appears as (many) limited spaces due to *upādhis* like jars, etc.; (2) Although the soul (*jīvas*) may be impure, the Self (*Ātman*) is always pure, just as *ākāśa* in a jar or in the sky may look smoky or dusty while really *Ākāśa* is always pure; (3) *Īśvara* is omnipresent, but may be meditated on as residing in the small space in the heart, just as Space is omnipresent, but may be thought of as space in an eye of a needle, etc.; (4) The world is never produced as something other than the Brahman, just as space in a jar never exists as anything other than universal Space; (5) The soul appears to merge with the Self (and “become” liberated) when soulness (*jīvatva*) is destroyed, just as the space in a jar “merges” with infinite Space when the jar is smashed.

Vācaspati and others propounded and defended *avaccheda-vāda*. The analogy to space supports an empirical plurality of *jīvas* since one can speak of many spaces in many different containers. Moreover, this analogy gives more (empirical) reality to the *jīva* because the reflection (*pratibimba*) analogy regards *jīvas* as appearances.

A main objection to the Bhāmatī view is that the *jīva* itself is the effect of *avidyā*. The reply is that it is incorrect to think of *avidyā* causing *jīva*-hood inasmuch as both *avidyā* and *jīva* are beginningless.

PRATIBIMBA-VĀDA

Pratibimba-vāda is the theory of reflection. Śaṅkara uses the analogy of reflected sun to teach : (1) The Self has “entered” the

ernal organs (*antahkaraṇas*) of all conscious beings (*jīvas*,) just the Sun is reflected (as sun) in various types of water; (2) The self is unaffected by the impurities of the *jīvas*, just as the Sun remains pure even if it is reflected in a pool of urine; (3) When the *antahkaraṇa* is removed the soul "becomes" the Self (*Ātman*), just as when water (or a mirror) is removed the reflected sun "becomes" or "returns to" the real Sun.

Basically, there are three variations of *pratibimba-vāda* in post-Śaṅkara Advaita. The double reflection or original *pratibimba* theory of Sarvajñātman maintains that when *Cit* is reflected in primal *avidyā* there is *Īśvara*, and when *Cit* is reflected in secondary *avidyā* (i.e., an *antahkaraṇa*) there is *jīva*; both *Īśvara* and *jīva* are reflections. A serious objection is that if *Īśvara*, like *jīva*, is a reflection then He too must be subject to the defects of the reflecting medium (*māyā/avidyā*) and cannot be omniscient, etc. This problem is overcome by the single reflection or *binba-pratibimba* theory of Prakāśātman : *Īśvara* is (not a reflection but) the prototype Consciousness (*Cit*) of which *jīva* is a reflection. However, if *Īśvara* is the original *Cit*, how can *Īśvara* be distinguished from the Brahman? A possible solution to this is to explain that the Brahman is completely unrelated, whereas *Īśvara* is related with *māyā/avidyā* and the *jīva*; the Brahman is like an unreflected face and *Īśvara* is like that same face turned toward a mirror (and, hence, related with the mirror and the reflection). Prakāśātman's view accords more reality to *Īśvara* than the other views do. The last view, which may be called the illusory reflection or *abhāsa* theory of Sureśvara, emphasizes that both *Īśvara* and *jīva* are appearances which are false (*nithyā*).

A main objection to the Vivaraṇa school is that the Brahman (like light) is pure, self-luminous Consciousness and is opposed to *avidyā* (like darkness which is cancelled by light) and so cannot be the locus (*āśraya*) of *avidyā*. The reply is that just as the sun lights up straw and burns it when its rays are focussed through a lens, so the pure *Cit* which sustains *avidyā* destroys it when it is reflected in mental psychosis.

KARMA AND FREE WILL

Īśvara is the moral judge who impartially rewards and punishes the *jīvas* according to their actions. Therefore, inequality

of circumstances is attributed to the individuals themselves. God, like rain, is the instrumental cause of the situations of the *jīvas*; *karmas*, like seeds, are the material causes. Just as *māyā* is *Īśvara*'s power, so *karma* is His law. *Māyā* cannot produce the universe without *Īśvara*'s direction and *karma* cannot produce the particular situations of the *jīvas* without *Īśvara*'s supervision.

There are three types of *karma* : (a) *prārabdha* - actions which have already begun to bear fruit in one's present life; (b) *sañcita* - *karmas* of previous lives requiring a (new) body; (c) *āgāmi*-*karmas* being accumulated now. The fructification of the latter two types of *karma* is prevented by self-realization (*nokṣa*) or by the grace of *Īśvara*. On the other hand, the first type is like an arrow which has already been shot and which will not cease until its own momentum is exhausted.

The law of *karma* is generally understood in terms of cause and effect and seems to stress free will. Just as one's own freely chosen actions in his past life have caused his present predicament, so what one freely decides to do now will determine his future destiny.

Man thinks that he is free when he asserts his own will and does whatsoever he pleases; but this is superficial egoistic freedom. Actually, by submitting one's own free will to God's will, i.e., by dedicating one's actions to God (as a servant would to his master), one becomes freer (from the bondage of *karma* rebirth). The idea of *Īśvara* as the inner ruler doing everything is more spiritually beneficial than the idea of man having free will because it curtails individuality (*ahaṁkāra*). This is the purpose of the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (3.8) teaching of Divine determinism.

Ultimately, the truth is that the *Ātman*/*Brahman* does not act and is never (re-)born, so both notions, of God acting and man acting, are false.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

There have been several attempts by theologians to solve the problem of evil. The "Not All-powerful Solution" conceives

evil as due to a wicked person with whom (limited) God is fighting. However, this theory of a limited God is religiously unsatisfactory. The "Aesthetic Solution" is that the whole is good even though the parts are not. Yet, it is difficult for one to think of the whole picture when one has just lost a close relative. Moreover, although a beautiful painting may consist of dark as well as light colors, no one suffers when the artist paints these dark colors on the canvas. According to the "Necessary Solution" evil must exist for men to have something to fight against and strive to be good. This solution explains moral evil, but not physical evil (i. e., natural disasters, etc.). Another "solution", often presented by preachers to their congregations, is to simply say that evil is a mystery which cannot be understood by human reason and that one should not let evil shake his faith in God. The problem is that this "solution" appeals only to those who already possess a strong faith in God (and is unlikely to convince others). The "Man is Free Solution" maintains that evil is God's punishment for man's past bad actions. The Indian tradition, with its dogmas of *karma* and rebirth, can even explain physical evil by this theory: e. g., a flood may be attributed to collective bad behavior. This theory solves the problem, but may not be true. Moreover, punishment cannot be corrective because the individual cannot remember what he did wrong (in this life or in a previous life) to deserve it. According to the "Discipline Solution" evil disciplines man, builds his character, and makes him worthy of salvation; the world is a vale of soul-making. Men are imperfect because they are immature - they are growing to perfection. The main fault with this theory is that much of the physical and psychological suffering men endure degrades them rather than ennobles them. The last attempt to solve the problem of evil is the "Illusion Solution"-evil is not ultimately real, but is merely an illusion (due to ignorance). Once one overcomes ignorance or, in other words, knows the *Ātman/Brahman*, he realizes that the "facts" of the reality of the world and of evil are fictions-i. e., true from the phenomenal (*vyāṇohārīka*) point of view, but false from the absolute (*pāramārthika*) point of view.

GOD AS THE REVEALER OF SCRIPTURE

Advaita Vedānta reconciles the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā views regarding scripture (*śruti*): the Veda depends on the personal Lord to be revealed, but what the Lord reveals is not something new which He has created.

It is necessary for Īśvara to reveal the Veda over and over again because no other means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) can provide men with the knowledge of the Ātman/Brahman. Only a being like Īśvara, who is in the *vyāvahārika* plane but who knows the Brahman of the *pāramārthika* realm as His own Self, can reveal the Brahman to others. Thus, Īśvara acts as the mediator between the ignorant *jīva* and the Ātman/Brahman.

The Veda may only be in the *vyāvahārika* plane, but it can wake one up to the *pāramārthika* truth, just as the tiger seen in a dream can wake one up to (everyday) reality.

VII. THE PLACE OF GOD IN ACHIEVING FINAL REALIZATION

Advaita Vedānta grades spiritual seekers (*adhikāris*) and recommends specific spiritual disciplines (*sādhana*s) accordingly. Dull-witted (*mandah*) individuals should practice (ordinary) *karma yoga*, the middle grade (*madhyamah*) of seekers should take up *bhakti yoga*, and the foremost type (*uttamah*) of *adhikāris* are suited for *jñāna yoga*.

Compulsory daily rites and rites for special occasions (*nitya* and *naimittika karmas*), performed in this life or in a previous life, may prepare one for *jñāna yoga*. Similarly, the ordinary *karma yoga* of the dull-witted, which consists in doing work unconcerned with any personal reward but simply as worship of God, prepares one for *jñāna yoga*. However, the perfection of *karma yoga*, which is completely selfless, spontaneous action (wherein God need not even be involved), may follow the dawn of *jñāna* (as was the case with Śaṅkara).

BHAKTI AND UPĀSANA

It may seem that *bhakti*, presupposing the duality of worshipper and worshipped, has no place in Śaṅkara's non-

dualistic system. However, it is only the final truth which is *advaita*; differences are admitted in the *vyāvahārika* plane.

Three levels of *bhakti* may be pointed out. Ordinary (*aparā*) *bhakti* is the devotion of the masses, i.e., of the distressed (*ārta*) and the seeker of worldly prosperity (*arthārthī*). This devotion to a personal God is useful to qualify one for *jñāna yoga*. Extraordinary (*madhyama*) *bhakti* is the *bhakti* of the seeker of knowledge (*jijñāsu*). One seeks to know the real nature of the Lord (i.e., *Īśvara* as the Brahman), or, in other words, inquires into his own real nature (i.e., *jīva* as the *Ātman*). Thus, extraordinary *bhakti* is almost indistinguishable from *jñāna yoga*. The supreme (*parā*) type of *bhakti* is that of the man of knowledge (*jñānī*) who knows the real nature of the Lord and his own real nature are not different.

The hymns attributed to Śaṅkara may be classified into three types. The dualistic (*dvaita*) hymns, written for *aparā bhaktas*, are either prayers for mercy or (simply) praises of the Lord. The hymns with a tendency to non-duality (*viśiṣṭadvaita*), written for *madhyama bhaktas*, are either internalized forms of worship or instructions in *sādhana*. Finally, the non-dualistic (*advaita*) hymns, fully understood only by other *parā bhaktas*, contain verses such as "I am Śiva".

There are fundamentally two kinds of *upāsana*. In *saguṇa upāsana* one meditates on the Brahman as qualified or qualified. The *saguṇa* Brahman on which one meditates is as real as oneself and by the very act of meditation duality begins to break down. This prepares one for *nirguṇa upāsana* wherein there is a continuous current of the same thought (on the *nirguṇa* Brahman) like an unbroken flow of oil. By meditation on the *nirguṇa* Brahman one "attains" final realization.

GRACE

Īśvara bestows His grace in various ways: by creating, by revealing scripture, by incarnating, etc. Moreover, the inclination towards the *sādhana* of *jñāna yoga* comes to men only by the grace of God.

Grace is internal illumination: God is in man lighting the lamp of wisdom and destroying the darkness of ignorance. "Final release also is effected through knowledge caused by the grace of the Lord." (BSB 2.3.41) The real "cause" of liberation is *jñāna*, but the grace of *Īśvara* may cause the arising of this knowledge.

LIBERATION

The *jīvan-mukta* has realized his own true nature in this life. He remains in the world, but is not of the world (since he is free from *ajñāna*).

Advaitins also sometimes write about *vidha-mukti* (i.e., liberation at the time of the death of the body), *krama-mukti* (i.e., gradual liberation along the path of the gods), and *sarva-mukti* (universal liberation). Regarding the last theory of liberation, Appayya Dikṣita argued that the liberated man can only attain the level of *Īśvara*; when all *jīvas* are liberated, the world/*māyā* vanishes. The problem with this theory is that there are an infinite number of *jīvas* so all can never be liberated. Ultimately, there is no question of all becoming free because the non-dual *Ātman/Brahman* is already and always free.

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